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Summitry Business Mostly Hard Work

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MOSCOW—The weather was perfect, and with everything in bloom, Moscow's beauty was at its peak. So President Nixon most days walked from his residence in the Kremlin to the office where he met with Secretary General Leonid I. Brezhnev of the Soviet Communist party.

The idea of an American president living inside the Kremlin walls took some getting used to, both for the Russians and Americans. To see the Stars and Stripes waving from a pole over the Grand Kremlin Palace was even more mind-boggling.

But the Nixons settled into their palace digs with remarkable ease, and by week's end seemed to be enjoying all that royal splendor, which has been preserved as a mockery to the past by the Soviet government.

THE AMERICAN press saw little of Nixon during the week and had to piece together his activities from reports provided by those close aides who hovered around him and tended to his needs.

When Nixon was not meeting with Brezhnev or with the Soviet "Big Three," he worked alone in a relatively modest office at his guest quarters. He worked at a walnut desk, dictating into a machine brought from the White House and making last touches on the important speech he was to make over Soviet television.

Even with the President in Moscow, routine work of the White House must go on. A part of every day had to be set aside for worldwide intelligence briefings, Vietnam War reports, review of bills and resolutions passed by Congress and other government matters that would not wait until he returned home.

NIXON ALSO received staff briefings daily, and frequently summoned his foreign policy adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, for private discussions, presumably on negotiating strategy.

In the quiet of the late afternoon, Nixon would again be alone. Sitting back in one of the modernistic chairs in his office, he would study the summit briefing books—14 of them packed in two brown leather suitcases—which had been prepared in Washington.

One of those books, it may be assumed, was labeled "Brezhnev" and contained every significant fact that the Central Intelligence Agency had been able to gather on the Soviet boss.

It would include personal data and psychological impressions for Nixon to study and later weigh as he met across the negotiating table. Brezhnev would have prepared himself likewise.

MUCH OF the business of summitry is really just hard work and intense preparation. The Russians have been masters of the game for centuries, the Americans singularly unsuccessful at it.

"Summitry," noted London's Sunday Telegraph last week, "is not, at the best of times, a form of diplomatic prowess at which the Americans excel. And this, to say the least, is not the best of times."

Nixon has long been aware of the U.S. experience in summitry and had vowed to make this important conference produce something positive.

GOOD WILL and hopeful atmospherics, he said, mean little; the only significant thing, for the long term, is whether the two sides can come to substantive agreements on the issues that divide them.

All of the agreements announced last week, important as they are, will mean little if Nixon and the Soviet leaders have failed to create at least some measure of trust in each other.

Trust comes extremely hard for the inherently suspicious Soviets. Nixon won't break down their barriers entirely, but he may have made progress in that direction by [illegible] here has been the most serious and well prepared of a U.S. president in decades.